

who sponsored the House companion to this bill on this important legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CICILLINE. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bipartisan measure because stalking is a crime in which victims are made to live in constant fear. The effects of stalking can manifest both physically and mentally and have short-term and long-term consequences.

In this digital and technological world that we have now all immersed ourselves in, it is imperative that we remain more vigilant of the nefarious activities of those lurking in the shadows to exploit our children's vulnerabilities.

Hence, I support the Combat Online Predators Act and I urge all of my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. CICILLINE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, S. 134.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

SERVICEMEMBERS AND VETERANS INITIATIVE ACT OF 2020

Ms. ESCOBAR. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 8354) to establish the Servicemembers and Veterans Initiative within the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 8354

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Servicemembers and Veterans Initiative Act of 2020."

SEC. 2. SERVICEMEMBERS AND VETERANS INITIATIVE.

(a) **ESTABLISHMENT.**—There is established the Servicemembers and Veterans Initiative within the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice.

(b) **DUTIES.**—The Servicemembers and Veterans Initiative shall—

(1) serve as legal and policy advisor to the Attorney General on the Department of Justice's efforts to enforce criminal and civil laws that impact servicemembers, veterans, and their families;

(2) develop policy recommendations for the Attorney General on how the Department of Justice may improve enforcement of Federal law to support servicemembers, veterans, and their families;

(3) serve as the liaison and point of contact between the Department of Justice and the military departments;

(4) provide counsel to the Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Justice Programs to ensure funding decisions take into account servicemembers, veterans, and their families;

(5) consult with components of the Department of Justice to promote the provision of civil legal aid to servicemembers, veterans, and their families;

(6) serve as a liaison and point of contact with the Consumer Protection Branch of the Civil Division of the Department of Justice, with respect to the prosecution of Federal crimes involving fraud that target servicemembers; and

(7) serve as a liaison and point of contact with other components of the Department of Justice as needed to support the enforcement of other Federal laws that protect servicemembers and veterans, as the Attorney General determines appropriate.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. ESCOBAR) and the gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. ARMSTRONG) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Texas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. ESCOBAR. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Texas?

There was no objection.

Ms. ESCOBAR. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of my bill, H.R. 8354, the Servicemembers and Veterans Initiative Act of 2020.

I thank Chairman NADLER for his leadership and support of this important legislation, along with my colleague from Texas, Congressman TAYLOR, for leading this bill with me.

This measure is the result of a truly bipartisan effort. My staff also worked closely with the committee and incorporated feedback from the Department of Justice in drafting the text. I am so grateful to everyone who made this bill better.

The Servicemembers and Veterans Initiative Act establishes in statute the Servicemembers and Veterans Initiative within the Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division. The bill details the initiative's responsibilities to promote the legal interests of servicemembers, veterans, and their families, such as advising the Attorney General on efforts to support this population; developing policy recommendations; and serving as the liaison and point of contact with other components of DOJ to support the enforcement of Federal laws that protect servicemembers and veterans, like coordinating the prosecution of fraud.

As the proud Representative of Texas' 16th Congressional District, home to Fort Bliss and nearly 50,000 veterans, I know firsthand the importance of protecting this population with unique needs that necessitate specialized knowledge of the armed services and veterans' affairs.

I have learned more about the military community through my seat on the House Armed Services Committee,

where I have heard various examples of the challenges they face, from financial scams that unfairly target this population to unsafe housing conditions.

Currently, the Servicemembers and Veterans Initiative draws on personnel from the Civil Rights Division and the Office of Justice Programs to enforce civil laws, such as the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act, the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act of 1986, and the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act, among others, to protect our servicemembers, veterans, and their families.

Creating an independent and permanent home for these employees will allow them to better protect servicemembers and preserve institutional knowledge. The bill would also ensure that DOJ is coordinating closely with the military departments so that servicemembers, veterans, and their families are aware of their legal rights and available benefits.

Several veterans service organizations have endorsed this measure—Paralyzed Veterans of America, Student Veterans of America, and Veterans Education Success—recognizing the significance of having a dedicated focus on those who have served our Nation.

Finally, I am grateful to Senator HIRONO for introducing this measure in the Senate, and I look forward to working with her to advance the bill further.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this measure, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ARMSTRONG. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 8354, codifies the DOJ's Servicemembers and Veterans Initiative, the important work that our Department does to honor and support our Nation's veterans.

The initiative coordinates with the Civil Rights Division and other Justice Department components to enforce Federal laws protecting servicemembers, veterans, and their families. These laws include the Uniformed Service Employment and Reemployment Rights Act, the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act, and the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act.

The DOJ's enforcement of these laws has helped our men and women in uniform. For example, the Department reports that enforcement of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act has provided more than \$474 million in relief for over 120,000 servicemembers whose rights were violated.

Just last year, Assistant Attorney General Eric Dreiband announced the largest-ever settlement against a landlord or property management company for violations of the SCRA. This is important work that needs to continue.

During the Trump administration, the Justice Department has expanded the Servicemembers and Veterans Initiative by launching the Veterans' Access Initiative. The Veterans' Access

Initiative focuses on accessibility issues for veterans and servicemembers under the Americans with Disabilities Act. The ADA is an important tool for ensuring that those veterans who return from service with a disability can effectively reintegrate into civilian life.

The Servicemembers and Veterans Initiative provides resources to the public and legal practitioners about Federal laws protecting servicemembers, veterans, and their families. The initiative also provides support and conducts outreach to servicemembers, veterans, and their families through the military departments.

This is a good bill to codify an existing Justice Department program, and I encourage all Members to support it.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. ESCOBAR. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ARMSTRONG. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. TAYLOR), my good friend.

Mr. TAYLOR. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the legislation that I introduced with my colleague and fellow Texan from the 16th District, VERONICA ESCOBAR, H.R. 8354, the Servicemembers and Veterans Initiative Act.

As a veteran who proudly served our country in the U.S. Marine Corps, I know how important it is to ensure that those who have served in our armed services are protected from fraud and appropriately represented by the Department of Justice.

We owe a great deal to the courageous men and women who risked their lives to keep us free. Just as they have fought to keep us safe, we must also work here in Congress to protect those servicemembers from those who wish to do them harm, and that is exactly what this bill aims to do.

H.R. 8354 would formally establish the Servicemembers and Veterans Initiative within the Civil Rights Division at the Department of Justice and codify its role and responsibilities. This office would be tasked with protecting the legal interests of the military and veterans community and advise the Attorney General on how to protect servicemembers and veterans from the fraud and predatory schemes that are out there.

Last year, the Federal Trade Commission noticed that U.S. servicemembers are increasingly becoming targets of fraud. In fact, our servicemembers and our veterans lose more on a dollar basis than the civilians who are targeted by similar schemes. This is unacceptable, and we owe it to those who serve to prevent this targeted crime.

The Servicemembers and Veterans Initiative at the Department of Justice would also play an important role in coordinating the prosecution of those who commit fraud specifically targeting our Nation's servicemembers and their families.

This bill is an important step toward protecting our Nation's heroes from

fraud, and I am proud to stand with my colleague, Congresswoman ESCOBAR, in support of this bipartisan legislation, and I urge all of my colleagues to vote in support of this important bill.

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Mr. ARMSTRONG. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. ESCOBAR. Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would like to thank my colleagues, specifically Mr. TAYLOR for his partnership on this very important bill and, again, Chairman NADLER and all of those, including staff and members of the Department of Justice, who made this a better bill.

Our servicemembers and veterans have worked tirelessly to protect us at home and abroad. It is only right that we work as hard as possible to protect their rights and shield them from abuses such as fraud, predatory lending, and other victimization.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all Members to support this bipartisan effort to ensure the best for our servicemembers, veterans, and their families, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, as a senior member of the Judiciary, Committee, I rise in strong support of H.R. 8354, the "Servicemembers and Veterans Initiative Act of 2020," which would permanently establish the Servicemembers and Veterans Initiative (SVI) within the Department of Justice's (DOJ) Civil Rights Division.

I thank my colleague from Texas, Congresswoman ESCOBAR (TX-16), for introducing this important legislation, which I am proud to be a cosponsor.

The Servicemembers and Veterans Initiative Act details SVI's responsibilities to promote the legal interests of servicemembers, veterans, and their families within the Department of Justice.

Among the responsibilities of the SVI would be to make policy on behalf of the Attorney General on legal issues that impact servicemembers, veterans, and their families and appoint a liaison to the Assistant Attorney General for the Criminal Division to coordinate Federal prosecutions involving cases of fraud against servicemembers.

SVI currently has no formal statutory authorization so assigning a liaison in SVI to coordinate criminal fraud prosecutions is critical to protecting servicemembers.

Civil actions initiated by DOJ have not, thus far, stemmed the rising number of fraud schemes, in housing in particular, that target servicemembers.

Criminal prosecutions, available under the current fraud statutes, would provide a strong deterrent to widespread efforts to defraud servicemembers.

By giving SVI a permanent home in DOJ's Civil Rights Division, this bill would ensure that DOJ will continue to provide outreach to servicemembers, will provide the Attorney General with policy recommendations on servicemember-related matters, and will enforce the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act, the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act of 1986, and the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act, among other laws.

Mr. Speaker, fraud schemes that target servicemembers and their families are especially pernicious.

Within just the preceding five years, the FTC received over 163,000 reports of fraud targeting military retirees and veterans, and nearly 13,000 fraud reports from active duty service members.

More shamefully, the FTC ascertained that the median loss in these cases was significantly higher for servicemembers and veterans than for their civilian counterparts.

Establishing this direct link to the Criminal Division will enable the Justice Department to be more effective in addressing civil and criminal frauds against servicemembers and their families.

A significant number of military veterans live in Houston, Texas.

They are business owners, laborers and community servants who continue to contribute to the local economy.

It is estimated that 18.5 million veterans live in the United States, of which 282,511 call Houston home.

In fact, the Houston metropolitan area is home to nearly one-fifth of Texas' veterans.

Houston-area servicemen and women have served in the Gulf wars, the Korean War and World War II.

But the largest percentage of the Houston veteran population served in the Vietnam War. Most of them are between 35 and 54 years old.

I call on my colleagues to join me in voting in favor of H.R. 8354 to provide much needed support for our nation's veterans.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. ESCOBAR) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 8354, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Ms. ESCOBAR. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to section 3 of House Resolution 965, the yeas and nays are ordered.

Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

OPEN COURTS ACT OF 2020

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 8235) to provide for the modernization of electronic case management systems, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 8235

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SEC. 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Open Courts Act of 2020".

SEC. 2. MODERNIZATION OF ELECTRONIC COURT RECORDS SYSTEMS.

(a) CONSOLIDATION.—Not later than the date specified in subsection (e), as modified by any adjustments certified pursuant to section 6(b), the Director of the Administrative Office of the United States Courts, in coordination with the Administrator of General Services, shall develop, deliver, and sustain, consistent with the requirements of